



Robert Bohmann, Chair
1105 Melvin Avenue
Racine, WI 53402
608-235-5825

Larry Bonde, Vice-Chair
22514 Rockville Road
Kiel, WI 53042
920-286-3327

Joe Weiss, Secretary
Jayne Meyer, Public Relations
Alan Suchla, Historian

DATE: May 27, 2014

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Rob Bohmann, Chair

SUBJECT: Congress Matters: 2014 Conservation Congress Advisory Question Summary and Annual Convention Report

I would like to take this opportunity to review the business conducted by the Congress at our annual meeting. The Wisconsin Conservation Congress convened for its 80th annual convention on May 8, 9, and 10, 2014, in Wausau. Our statewide delegation voted on the proposed DNR rule change, DNR advisory questions, Board advisory questions, and each of the proposed congress advisory questions from the 2014 spring hearing questionnaire (Attachment 1).

WCC Advisory Questions

There were 23 Congress advisory proposals presented for public comment at this year's Spring Hearings. Eighteen of these proposals were recommended for advancement to the Department, Natural Resources Board, and Legislature for consideration as possible future rule changes or legislation. The five proposals that were not supported by the delegation for advancement were also not supported by the public vote. These included the tundra swan hunting season, the transferring of a license or permit to anyone eligible to use it, the protection of white deer in the CWD zone, the retrieval of hunting dogs on private land without landowner permission, and increasing the Wisconsin inland waters trout stamp fee. Included in the recommendations advanced to the Department, Board, and Legislature for further consideration are the request for a Senior Resident Conservation Patron License, preventing non-resident novices from applying for LTH bear programs, creating a program to educate shooting ranges about managing lead, and regulations to limit the spread of terrestrial invasive species.

Congress Business

This convention was historic in more ways than one. Besides being the 80th anniversary of the Congress, the Congress leadership unveiled efforts to continue implementing the strategic plan and perhaps make some changes to the Spring Hearings. This is also the second year we have had the Youth Conservation Congress, an initiative undertaken following a request by this board. We are working to expand the program and better engage our youth delegates. We now have 17 students involved as youth delegates (seven of whom are new this year), and a number of them were able to attend the convention and participate in the discussion and breakout sessions arranged specifically for them. This marked a significant milestone for the Conservation Congress and we look forward to increased youth participation in our organization in the future.

In addition, the county delegations determined who would be chairing the newly created County Deer Advisory Committees. Having Congress delegates lead these committees is a highly visible and important role for the Congress. We look forward to this opportunity and are planning a training session for our delegates to ensure they are up to the challenge.

Awards

Again this year the Congress recognized a number of DNR employees for their outstanding service. Warden Tom Van Haren was recognized for his exemplary service to the Congress and the citizens of this state over his extensive career as Administrative Warden. John Olson, Furbearer Ecologist, received an award for his commitment to working cooperatively with citizens and expanding opportunities. Fisheries biologist Ben Heussner received our fisheries award for his dedication and excellent work improving the habitat and fisheries

in his work area of Waukesha County and his collaborative efforts with local user groups. Our warden of the year, Bob Stroess, formerly of Manitowoc County (now stationed in Green Bay), was recognized for his outstanding law enforcement efforts, his well-rounded program, and his work to involve the community in protecting Wisconsin's resources. Mike Stahl (Oconto County) was awarded the waterfowl officer of the year by the WCC Migratory Committee for his leadership within his community and commitment to waterfowl education. We also honored Mike Rogers from Sauk County, with our newly named David A. Ladd Delegate of the Year Award. Mike has been on the Congress for 24 years and he is always willing to step up to the plate when called and ready to take a youth or novice hunter out into the field with him.

The WCC also started a new tradition this year by beginning a Wisconsin Conservation Congress Hall of Fame. The inaugural inductee was Dave Ladd who, as you know, has created a legacy devoted to conservation. We look forward to continuing this tradition by inducting many more deserving individuals in the years to come.

We handed out years of service certificates and pins to those delegates who have served the congress for 15, 20, 25, 30 and over 35 years. Impressively, we have 12 delegates that individually have 35 or more years of service to the Congress.

Rounding out our awards, the 2013 Statewide Conservation Organization of the Year Award went to the Urban Ecology Center, the Outstanding Local Organization was awarded to the Bad River Watershed Association, and the 2013 Educator of the Year was awarded to Trent Tonn, a teacher in Burlington, who actively teaches species identification and hunting, trapping, fishing, and outdoor skills to his students.

DNR Rule Change Proposals

The full delegation reviewed and registered their support or opposition to each of the questions that the Department presented.

This year Fisheries Management presented one rule change proposal for public consideration on motor trolling and is advancing it for Board adoption. The Congress supports this rule change as presented.

In respect to the DNR's advisory questions, all of the Congress votes followed the majority vote of the public to support or reject these ideas but we recognize that those are not proposed rule changes at this time and any rules relating to those questions would be brought before the Board at a future date.

In addition, the Congress supported the NRB's advisory question numbers 32 and 33 relating to the simplification of stamp requirements for hunting and fishing, as well as question 34 pertaining to banning the feeding of deer prior to the gun deer season. The delegation rejected question 35 concerning the harvest of white and albino deer.

Officer Elections

On Friday, May 9 the delegates from our twelve districts elected their 2014-15 Executive Councilors. I would like to thank each of the councilors from 2013-14 that will not be returning this year as councilors and also congratulate those that have been elected or reelected. I have included a list of our new Executive Council in this memo for your information (Attachment 2).

As recommended by the strategic plan and implemented for the first year in 2013, our Executive Committee now includes five members. The public relations and outreach coordinator position will be held by Jayne Meyer (Dane County) and Al Suchla (Trempealeau County) will continue in his role as historian. Joe Weiss (Washburn County) was re-elected as the secretary, Larry Bonde (Manitowoc County) was re-elected to vice-chair, and I was honored to be re-elected to serve another year as Chair.

In closing I would like to thank Chair Cole for his presentation at our convention, and Board members Jane Wiley, Greg Kazmierski, and Gary Zimmer for attending our meeting. It was great to have so many of you at our convention engaging with our delegates. Your involvement and attendance is a testament to your commitment to the role of the Congress as an advisory body to the Natural Resources Board.